

One Sunday a pastor preached a sermon on honesty. Monday morning, he took the bus to get to his office. He paid the fare, and the bus driver gave him back too much change. During the rest of the journey, the pastor was rationalizing how God had provided him with some extra money he needed for the week, but he just could not live with himself, so before he got off the bus, he proceeded to give back the extra money and said to the driver, “You have made a mistake. You’ve given me too much change.”

The driver smiled and said, “There was no mistake. I was at your church yesterday and heard you preach on honesty. So, I decided to put you to a test this morning.”

We call that walking in integrity. Now we have talked about *walking* before and it refers to our manner of living – our lifestyle, **but what about integrity? What is integrity?**

Well, the word *integrity* comes from the root word “*integer*” which we learned way back in math class means a whole number – not a fraction, and in the context of moral character, *integrity* speaks of a person who is morally whole – he or she is morally upright through and through – there is no division – they are the same person in private (when no one is watching) as they are in public.

This morning, as we continue in **Daniel**, we will see a man who walks with integrity, who’s circumstances dramatically change, but his moral convictions do not. He’s undivided, and what you see on the outside is the same on the inside.

If you recall from last week, the mighty Babylonian Empire was defeated, King Belshazzar was slain, the new Medo-Persian Empire is now ruling the known world, and King Darius – a military general of the Mede army is appointed by King Cyrus to oversee all of Babylon.

Now, as you might image, after a conquest of this magnitude, King Darius would want to reorganize the government to establish his authority and make things conform to his own leadership style and goals, but when Darius began to do this, he exposed a conflict between Daniel and the other officials in his government – a conflict that would eventually put Daniel’s integrity to the test.

So, with some fresh eyes, we are going to look at a well-known story to many of you, and if you have your Bible, turn to **Daniel 6** and we will begin with **verse 1**. We are told,

¹It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, ² and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. ³ Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

King Darius begins to reorganize his government, and he appoints **120 satraps** – whom we might call *governors*, to rule over the various providences in the empire. In their role, they have several important functions in the government – one of which is to collect taxes for the king. Now it would be impossible for the king to oversee everything in the empire and to supervise all these governors, so the king appointed **three commissioners** to report directly to him, and they were to manage the affairs of the governors, and to ensure the governors did not help themselves to the king's taxes.

Of these three commissioners, Daniel, who is about 83 years old and retired at the time, is pulled back into royal service by Darius. Apparently, the king did his homework, he gathered information, and he learned that Daniel had a reputation for wisdom and integrity. Well, over time, Daniel proved to be such a superior and trusted commissioner – a man of integrity walking in tune with his God, that Darius planned to make him his number one guy over the entire empire.

This is very similar to the story of Joseph in Egypt, where he went from the pit, to a prison, to the palace. Just like Joseph, Daniel is planned to be elevated to the king's right-hand man, but not everyone is in favor of the king's plan.

Let's continue beginning with **verse 4**.

⁴Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

The other two commissioners and the governors hear about the king's plan to elevate Daniel and it does not sit well with them. They are envious and jealous, and more importantly, if Daniel is in charge, they won't be able to use their

positions for personal profit. They don't want that old Jewish exile telling them what to do and checking on their work – they can't get away with what they want to get away with – and they got to stop this somehow. So, they start digging for dirt, they look for skeletons in Daniel's closet so they might accuse him before the king, but nothing against Daniel can be found. They found nothing lacking in his performance or his personal character – they got to take a different approach.

If they are going to get Daniel, it must pertain to his faithfulness towards his God. **Now, how did they know this?** Because Daniel did not hide his faith in the one true God. They knew he prayed in his home three times a day with his window open towards Jerusalem, and they concluded the only way to get Daniel would be to force him to choose between obedience to the Medo-Persian law and obedience to his God. They knew that if the king made prayer to one's God illegal, then they had Daniel right where they wanted him.

So, they put their devious plan in motion, and beginning with **verse 6** we are told,

⁶Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: “King Darius, live forever! ⁷All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. ⁸Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.” ⁹Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

King Darius must have been impressed when all these government officials showed up in his throne room, and of course, Daniel was not among them.

Then, they start to butter up the king. They knew the king wanted to unify the kingdom and what better way than to focus on the great king himself and make him not just their leader but the only god for an entire month. In effect, they said, *“Hey king, we've all been talking and we have a great idea. We would like to make you the ‘god of the month’, and for the next thirty days all prayers must be directed towards you. And if anyone prays to any other god, well, it's to the lion's den for them. **How does that sound O king – god of the month?**”*

They appealed to the king's pride, and the king takes the bait – **“Sure, why not? It could be fun being the god of month”** and Darius signed it into law, knowing that it

could not be repealed – not even by himself. If you recall in the book of **Esther**, under Medo-Persian law, once a law was signed into effect by the king, it could not be changed or nullified or repealed – not even by the king.

Unfortunately, by signing this law into effect, the king had no idea that Daniel was secretly the only intended target, and that brings us to **verse 10**.

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

This might be the heart of the story. Daniel hears about the new law – his enemies waste no time in proclaiming it because they want him out of there sooner than later, **and what does Daniel do?** He does what he has always done – what **he had been doing previously** – he prayed.

With his very life on the line, Daniel's change in circumstances did not change his convictions. He was consistent, he's undivided, he was a man of integrity. He did not pray to *show* his integrity, he prayed *because* of his integrity.

Now, maybe Daniel could have closed the windows in his house. Maybe he could have prayed in another room. Maybe he could have justified taking a break from praying for 30 days. Maybe he could have taken the stance – *"I'm a very old man, I've paid my dues to the Lord, I've served You my whole life – for over 80 years"* but no – Daniel is faithful to his God and he will not compromise his devotion to Him. He just stays the course.

In one region of Africa, the first converts to Christianity were very diligent about praying, in fact, the believers each had their own special place outside the village where they went to pray in solitude. The villagers reached these places of prayer by using their own private footpaths through the brush.

When grass began to grow over one of these trails, it was evident that the person to whom it belonged was not praying very much, and because these new Christians were concerned for each other's spiritual welfare – a unique custom sprang up.

Whenever anyone noticed an overgrown "prayer path," he or she would go to the person and lovingly say, "Friend, there's grass on your path!"

Well, there's absolutely no grass on Daniel's path, and in spite of this new law banning all prayer except to King Darius for 30 days, Daniel faithfully carries on in with his routine of praying to his God just as he had done before.

When the pressure was on, Daniel stayed the course with his God, and that's walking in integrity.

Three times a day for many years, like clockwork, Daniel had prayed, giving thanks and making his requests known to God. It was a routine in his life, and sure enough – with his window open towards Jerusalem, his enemies find him praying.

That brings us to **verse 11**, and let me say that doing right is no guarantee that everything will go right.

¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. ¹² Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

The men who had spied on Daniel hurried to inform King Darius that his favorite guy had disobeyed the law he had just signed about prayer, suggesting that Daniel was being disrespectful towards the king. They called Daniel out as one **the exiles from Judah**, it was a demeaning remark – "*he's one of those people*", but these men did not realize that even though exiled, God was with *those people*.

Now, there's every evidence to believe that Darius had become very fond of Daniel, and that helps to explain our next few verses. Beginning with **verse 14** we are told,

¹⁴ Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, "Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed."

The king was crushed, he was a mental wreck because he realized his foolish pride got the best of him. Snared in a trap of his own making, he put Daniel – his friend and his greatest help in peril.

The king didn't want to sign the death warrant, but there were no appeals, there were no loop holes in the law to wiggle his way out of this – he spent all day looking for a way to rescue Daniel from execution but his efforts failed, and of course, Daniel's enemies were on hand to remind the king that he had to enforce the law whether he liked it or not. At the end of the day, Darius had to call Daniel and have him put in the lion's den.

Then beginning with **verse 16** we read,

¹⁶ Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."¹⁷ A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.¹⁸ Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

With no way out for the king, he orders that Daniel be cast into the **lion's den**. The lion's den was the preferred method of execution of the Persians. The lion's den was a large pit divided by a moveable wall that could be pulled up to allow the lions to go from one side to the other. The keeper would put food in the empty side and lift up the wall so the lions would cross over and eat. He would then quickly lower the wall to then clean the safe side of it. Oh, and there is something else – the lions weren't fed very often, and when they were fed, it wasn't much – for from the Persian perspective – the leaner the meaner. They were always hungry.

So, as Daniel is lowered into the pit, the king speaks these words to him, **"Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you."** In essence the king is saying, *"Daniel, I tried my best to save you, but I can't. Now it's completely up to your God whom you constantly serve."* He's speaking of Daniel's integrity.

Daniel is going to end up in the lion's den for doing what was right, and you know what – God wanted it this way. The pit was covered and the stone was sealed so that everything was done according to the law, and nobody would dare break the king's official seal.

Well, the king had a terrible night. He was sleepless and restless, and he fasted – he’s wondering if the Lord is going to deliver Daniel, and unbeknownst to the king, Daniel is having a better night than he is.

Let’s see what happened beginning with **verse 19**.

¹⁹ Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den. ²⁰ When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?” ²¹ Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever! ²² My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.” ²³ Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

King Darius arose with the first light of dawn and made his way to the lions’ den. Even before he got to the pit and ordered the seal broken and the stone removed, and then he called out with a question – “*Daniel, servant of the living God whom you constantly serve, was your God able to deliver you?*”

King Darius had previously signed a law that everyone had to turn to him as god for a month, but now the tables have turned and Darius is calling Daniel’s God – the living God. Then out of the darkness, out of his hardship, out of the pit, Daniel’s voice is heard – “*Yes, my God is able. He sent an angel to shut the lion’s mouths and they have not harmed me. I am innocent before God and I am innocent before you O king.*”

When the king heard Daniel’s voice, he knew that his friend and trusted helper had been delivered, and the lions did nothing but keep him company throughout the night. Daniel, this 83-year-old man was pulled out of the pit and no wound was found on him, **because he trusted in his God.**

So, the lions went hungry that night – they were starving, but breakfast is on the way. Look at **verse 24**.

²⁴ The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the

lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

What goes around comes around – sin has consequences and sometimes those consequences may involve others. We are told that the king threw the men who had schemed against Daniel into the lion's den along with their families. It seems cruel to us that the families were also executed along with the men, but that was an official Persian law – written that way because they didn't want the remaining family members to later conspire to kill the ruler who had ordered the execution. So, it was – “*kill them all*” – the men, the women and their children.

They were all thrown into the pit, and we are told that the lions were catching them in the air before they hit the bottom.

Now, beginning with **verse 25**, the king issues a new decree, and I need to remind you that these words come from a pagan king.

²⁵ Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: “May your peace abound! ²⁶ I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel;

**For He is the living God and enduring forever,
And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,
And His dominion will be forever.**

**²⁷ “He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”**

²⁸ So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Can you imagine a decree like that coming from the White House and being broadcast over every television station in the nation?

God could have kept Daniel out of the lion's den. God could have delivered him *from* the pit, but instead, God delivered Daniel *in* the pit, and through it, God's power and glory was unmistakable – the result – this decree about the living God from a pagan king. This was the real decree that was needed to be made by the king, and it was only made because God allowed Daniel in the lion's den.

We need to remember this story of Daniel and the lion's den the next time we try to escape the trials and the difficulties and the hardships we find ourselves in, not realizing that God might desire us to walk through those trials and difficulties and hardships with integrity so that He might be glorified and people might be changed.

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